415 324 531 178 The flute-work in the corners and the strong handles of solid stone both disappeared, though the latter survived among the Caribou Eskimo.[1] In order perhaps to replace the handles, the neat ridges were lowered down the face of the short ends, and they were dropped entirely from the longer sides. With regard to the flute-work in each corner one may perhaps conjecture that it was a rounded projection pierced with a suspension hole, as in the pots of West Greenland,[2] to avoid drilling through the actual wall. So far as I know no specimen exists of the type of pot seen by Hearne.

TABLE

352 The table, having no legs, was practicable only in a snow-hut where one end could be supported by the snow wall.[3] As soon as the snow melted, therefore, it was cached with the lamp at some convenient spot on land and abandoned until the early winter. In shape, it was roughly rectangular, with one end often a little wider than the other; and in size, it ranged from 3½ to 4½ feet long by 10 to 15 inches wide. An average specimen is shown in Figure 61.

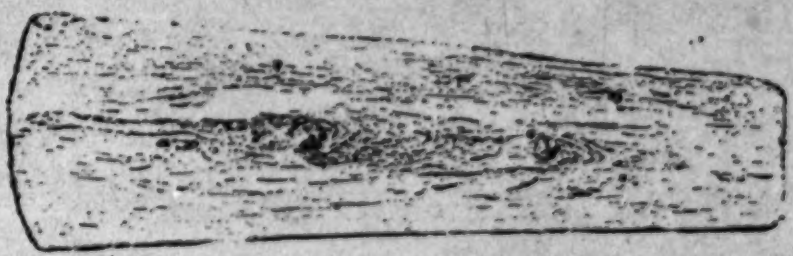

Figure 61. Table. IV.D.898. Approx. 1/12.

DRYING FRAME

417 The Copper Eskimo generally bestowed very little care on the making and handling of their drying frames, which, in consequence, were frequently broken and bent out of shape. Properly made specimens were never round, but roughly oval, the curve being flattened on the long side that fronted the sleeping platform. [414] Occasionally the two ends of the wooden hoop were merely lashed together; more often they were pegged with bone or copper pins. The frame was further strengthened by cross bars of sticks that passed at intervals of a few inches from one long side to the other and were lashed to the under edge of the frame exactly as the cross bars of a sled were lashed to the runners. Newly made [286] specimens, especially if large, had webbings of rawhide, but when the rawhide dried out and broke the owners often mended it with sinew. The thongs passed through holes (often sunken) in the frame, forming a warp and a weft that interlaced in what is known as cross-weft pattern, and gave square meshes from 2 to 4 inches across. A typical drying frame is shown in Figure 62. Simpson reported frames made of baleen on the south coast of Victoria Island near Wellington Bay,[4] but all that I observed were made of wood.

[113] [113] [113]

[1] Birket-Smith, K.: The Caribou Eskimos. pt. 1, p. 162; Report of the Fifth Thule Expedition 1921-24. vol. V. Copenhagen, 1929.

[2] Thomsen, T.: Implements and Artifacts of the North-East Greenlanders; Meddelelser om Grønland, vol. XLIV, p. 442.

[3] For the method of supporting the table, lamp, cooking pot, and drying frame see Reports of the Canadian Arctic Expedition, vol. XII, pt. A, p. 61.

[4] Simpson, Thomas: Narrative of the Discoveries on the North Coast of America. London, 1843, p. 204.

ART

In the field of art the Copper Eskimo accomplished far less than their kinsmen in the eastern and western Arctic, not because they lacked the same gifts, but rather because they failed to develop them. In the decoration of their clothing they displayed a feeling for line and colour, a sense of balance and harmonious composition not surpassed by any other Eskimo group. They demanded symmetry in everything. The insertions on their coats, trousers, and stockings, and the arrangement of the lemming skin pendants, all were governed by this passion for symmetry. Thus, a woman who was sewing two pairs of caribou ears to the shoulders of her coat spaced them at even distances, with the larger pair on the outside and the smaller pair within at a slightly lower level. Symmetry governed also the shapes of many implements. No Eskimo group made trimmer tools and weapons, toggles, and buckles; and the splicing of wood, especially of arrow shafts, was amazingly accurate.

One may believe, therefore, that they possessed in full measure the artistic talents of other Eskimo, but that fashion kept these talents latent. They could have produced the delicate carvings and engravings in bone and ivory that we find in Alaska, and, to a lesser extent, in the eastern Arctic, but the impulse was lacking. They did, it is true, engrave a few simple designs, and make a few rough carvings, mainly for fishing lines and needle-cases; but the "picture-writing" of the western Eskimo, and the naturalistic shapes given to toggles, drum handles, and many other objects were conspicuously absent.

Weaving, except the finger braiding of sinew for sealing lines, was an unknown art, and painting almost equally unknown. The runners of two sleds bore a series of Y designs painted in red and black on their fore ends; otherwise, paint served only to colour skin. Needle-cases and bow-case handles usually bore engraved lines, but other objects only occasionally. The principal designs are shown in Figure 187. The ring-and-dot pattern was not very common, and

Figure 187. Typical design elements of the Copper Eskimo.

the diagonal lines inside a circle I saw only on a button (Figure 378b). The standard patterns were parallel straight lines and a Y in various combinations; these two were tattooed on the face and wrists (Figures 44, 45), painted, as stated above, on two sleds, inset as stripe of fur or skin in the clothing (Figures 28, 29), and engraved on many small bone objects. Fully 60 per cent of the needle-cases were decorated with two Y patterns end to end inside a frame of straight lines (Figures 94, 95, 96), and the commonest design on bow-case handles (Figure 188) was another combination of the Y figure. Radiating lines (two or more), and zigzags, were not common except in tattooing. Rarer still were